**Acer griseum**  
**Paperbark Maple**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Perhaps the most beautiful maple, Paperbark Maple has trifoliate leaves and wonderfully orange to bronze, peeling, papery bark which provides year round interest (Fig. 1). The bark begins peeling on the sculptured trunk and on 2 or 3-year-old branches. It may be cinnamon brown or orange but is usually a dark reddish-brown, looking particularly striking in the snow. Even small branches display exfoliating bark making this a true specimen tree, even at a young age. Most specimens are seen with multiple trunks which branch close to the ground, but proper training when young can create a single trunk. Paperbark maple has vibrant, scarlet, autumn foliage.

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**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Scientific name: *Acer griseum*  
Pronunciation: AY-ser GRISS-ee-um  
Common name(s): Paperbark Maple  
Family: Aceraceae  
USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 7 (Fig. 2)  
Origin: not native to North America  
Uses: Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; specimen  
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

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**DESCRIPTION**

Height: 15 to 25 feet  
Spread: 15 to 25 feet  
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette  
Crown shape: oval; upright; vase shape  
Crown density: open
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: odd pinnately compound; trifoliate
Leaflet margin: serrate
Leaflet shape: elliptic (oval); ovate
Leaflet venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaflet blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: red
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: green
Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; oval
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; very showy trunk; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: brown
Current year twig thickness: medium; thin
The tree is hardy, grows very slowly to 25 or 30 feet tall, but, unfortunately, is difficult and expensive to propagate. It does not tolerate extended drought or other environmental stresses in the south or in poor soil (moderate drought-tolerance in sandy loam) but will grow in sun or shade. Leaves will scorch during dry summers unless provided with some irrigation. Probably best in partial shade if planted in the south. The beauty of this tree makes up for the extra effort required to grow it. If this plant could be easily propagated it would be widely used because the price of the plant would drop to levels acceptable to most people.

**Pests and Diseases**

Probably has similar pest and disease problems as other maples.

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in the shade; tree grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate  
**Soil salt tolerance:** moderate

**Other**

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
**Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

The multi-stemmed habit, unusual leaves, and wonderful bark makes this a prime candidate for specimen planting in any commercial, institutional, or residential landscape. If you can find it, plant it by a patio or other prime location and light it from below for nighttime enjoyment.